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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 9.40 p.m.

Agenda item 46 *(continued)*

Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(a) Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): It seems to me that after every speaker it becomes more difficult to say something new to underline the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fiftieth anniversary we are marking today, especially after the wonderful performance that was given by Luciano Pavarotti and Wynton Marsalis.

What could be more fundamental for people than the set of rights proclaimed by the Declaration and which many present here take for granted? Secretary-General Kofi Annan is right to say that human rights are what make us human.

History reminds us that human rights are integral elements in ensuring human dignity and in promoting peace and security, sustainable economic development and social equality. Without genuine respect of human rights, we cannot move forward as a global community.

For many States, the Declaration has become a model for elaborating national constitutional practices. The Constitution of Ukraine, adopted in 1996, is also based on the humanistic ideals of this universal document. I should like to recall that the tradition of democracy and protection of human rights has deep historical roots in Ukraine. Almost 10 centuries ago, after embracing Christianity, Prince Volodymyr abolished the death penalty. The Ukrainian Kozak Republic of the seventeenth century was one of the first democracies in Europe. In 1710, Ukrainian head of State Pylyp Orlyk wrote the first democratic constitution of Ukraine, which established a clear allocation of power and promoted personal rights and freedoms.

Since the Vienna Conference, we have seen a new, broader vision of human rights that includes social and economic rights as well as civil and political ones such as the right to education, health and development.

But as we assess what has been accomplished during the past 50 years, we cannot say that the gap has been bridged between aspirations and concrete achievements. Unfortunately, we still live in a world in which massacres of national, ethnic, racial or religious groups continue, where millions are uprooted from their homes and untold numbers are arrested arbitrarily or imprisoned without a trial. Sadly, we continue to live in a world in which torture is still practiced, in which more than a billion people live in poverty, where children are still exploited and sexually abused, the elderly neglected and women denied their fundamental human rights.

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Globalization has opened borders to new ideas and information, providing us with new opportunities to build a universal culture of human rights. Democracy has taken root in the majority of States. Conditions have been created for ensuring further progress in promoting human rights that could not have been imagined by those who drafted the Universal Declaration in 1948.

It has always been the task of the United Nations to provide a forum for diverse cultures and, at the same time, to seek the common denominator that bespeaks a common humanity. It is now our responsibility to strengthen the adherence of the international community to the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, and translate them into reality.

I should like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that in September this year, a very important international Conference devoted to the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights took place in the city of Yalta in Ukraine. Organized by the Government of Ukraine and the Regional Bureau of the United Nations Development Programme, it brought together delegations from 27 States of our region. One of the major achievements of the conference was the adoption of a Plan of Action that envisages the establishment of an international network for the gathering and exchange of information on the best practices in the promotion of human rights.

Today we are completing the yearlong commemoration of the universality of human rights, but this should not mean that we have finished our work. Despite the undeniable progress made in promoting the spirit of the Universal Declaration, we, as individual United Nations Member States and as the international community as a whole, still have a long way to go to build a world in which human rights and human dignity are respected on a daily basis.

The fifty-year mark is only a point at which we are pausing briefly to measure our accomplishments in reassessing the definition and the very meaning of human rights. Human rights cannot be protected by the mere desire to do so. Our rights are not worth the paper they are printed on unless we are vigilant in protecting them.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mrs. Fritsche (Liechtenstein): This fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a very memorable event indeed. The Declaration is without question the basis of the human rights activities of the United Nations, which has included human rights as a priority in its overall agenda.

Fifty years after its adoption, the Declaration constitutes international customary law and thus reflects the universal nature of all human rights. Its provisions apply to every human being worldwide. In addition, the Universal Declaration has served as the source of inspiration for developing the United Nations human rights system in that the six core human rights instruments elaborated within the United Nations all derive from the Universal Declaration. The universal ratification of those instruments must be an important goal for the international community on the occasion of this anniversary, during which we are also commemorating the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action — yet another milestone in the history of the United Nations.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I can inform the Assembly that this morning I deposited, on behalf of the Government of Liechtenstein, our instruments of accession to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as to the two Optional Protocols thereto. Liechtenstein wishes thus to underline today its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, within the United Nations as well as in other frameworks, which is one of the stipulated priorities of its foreign policy.

Given the overarching importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this is certainly an occasion to celebrate, but not one for self-congratulation. While we have achieved a lot in the past 50 years and created an impressive human rights regime on paper, it remains a sad fact that we are still far from achieving the key element in the area of our human rights work — their implementation in practice for the benefit of every individual in every country. The Declaration makes it clear that it is the individual that is the beneficiary of the rights contained therein. Other major human rights instruments, including the Declaration on the Right to Development, repeat and reaffirm this principle. While some of these rights can be exercised in a meaningful way only when given to collectivities, the individual remains the centre of human rights work — and it is individuals who continue to suffer worldwide from denials and violations of all human rights, sometimes committed in gross and systematic ways which reveal

State policies that utterly disregard the provisions of the Universal Declaration.

Fifty years have thus not been enough to make the Universal Declaration a reality in people's lives, and this is the challenge which we are facing today. Efforts to promote the dissemination of the Declaration are important and laudable, but implementation in practice can be achieved only if States take on their first responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights, complemented and supported by international cooperation as an essential element for achieving this purpose. The tasks ahead of us are numerous and complex, and they all require genuine political will and a true commitment to human rights from all of us.

Let me mention just two of these challenges. The Declaration established, 50 years ago, a link between human rights and international peace and security. We are thus all bound by this connection, but its translation into concrete action has been very slow indeed, and we need to increase our efforts in this regard, in particular by enhancing the preventive capacities of our Organization. We will also have to deal in a competent and responsible manner with the question of non-State actors, which is becoming increasingly important in this era of proliferation of internal conflicts which very often have particularly devastating consequences for the enjoyment of all human rights.

In conclusion, we welcome two developments which have taken place this year and constitute significant contributions to the Human Rights Year. The adoption of the Declaration on human rights defenders yesterday evening was a timely and important event, and we hope that this Declaration will contribute to eliminating the ironic fact that those who strive to secure the enjoyment of human rights — in accordance with the provisions of the Universal Declaration — are often subject to serious violations of human rights themselves. We would also like to reiterate our deep appreciation for the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court at the Diplomatic Conference in Rome. The Statute finally provides the international community with an effective means of breaking the circle of impunity and the commission of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. As a signatory to the Statute, we welcome its adoption as a landmark achievement and the most promising sign of the Human Rights Year.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish):* I now call on the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted 50 years ago, the General Assembly hailed it, in the words of the Declaration, as a "common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations". Today, with the benefit of hindsight, we realize that the strength of the Declaration lay in its ability to address future issues and concerns. It is a living document, and I doubt that, even 50 years on, we can improve upon what was crafted in 1948. It defines goals to which we aspire and outlines criteria by which we will be judged by future generations.

We in Bangladesh have drawn liberally on the Declaration to embody in our Constitution the fundamental rights and freedoms of our people, with special statutory provisions to ensure the rights of women, children, minorities and other vulnerable groups. As Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said in her message for today:

> "It is therefore an occasion for us to make a renewed pledge that the sacred ideals and goals set forth in the Declaration are translated into reality for every citizen of Bangladesh and to strive to secure those rights for the whole of mankind."

Since its adoption, the Declaration has inspired more than 60 international human rights instruments — an outstanding achievement by any standard. The Declaration remains today as the bedrock upon which the entire human rights regime is built. Today's anniversary provides us an opportunity to celebrate our achievements and prioritize our goals for the future.

During the last 50 years, we have witnessed that promotion and protection of human rights have an international dimension and depend a lot on the creation of a conducive international environment through effective cooperation and partnership. To ensure all human rights for all, the entire international community will have to meet the challenge together. We join others in affirming that we must all act when human rights are violated. Both States and individuals must be committed to promoting and protecting human rights.

The challenge before us assumes greater meaning against the backdrop of the approaching millennium. What should be the thrust of the United Nations to fulfil the promise of the Universal Declaration in the next century? The need for the realization of all human rights is so pressing and the consequence of delay so dire that

practical and action-oriented measures should be the order of the day.

Our first priority should be the eradication of poverty. To the one out of every five persons on earth living on less than a dollar a day, today's anniversary has very little to offer. It will matter to those millions only if the right to development assumes a centrality from which all human rights flow. It is indeed the measure of our respect for all other human rights.

The second priority would be to ensure that atrocities cannot be committed, that human dignity cannot be violated with impunity. The establishment of the International Criminal Court marks great progress towards this objective. This needs to be complemented at the national level through the establishment of national human rights mechanisms that are independent and effective in dealing with violations at the domestic level.

Finally, immediate measures must be taken for the fulfilment of the rights of women and children, in particular. Vulnerability needs to be factored in while prioritizing these measures. Special efforts are required to address the needs of women in poverty, women with disabilities and female migrant workers. The needs of children, and especially those of the girl child, must be met. Women and children must be protected from violence. Unless we can do that, today's theme — "All Human Rights for All" — will remain only that — a theme and nothing more.

There is still a considerable gap between our aspirations and our achievement. Generations have struggled with dedication towards achieving the goals of the Declaration. We, too, cannot but persevere till we reach our objective. The Declaration will continue to inspire and guide us on our way.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I call upon the representative of India.

Mr. Sharma (India): The version of my statement that is being circulated in the room is almost as long as the faces of those who are receiving it, but I shall limit my intervention to the agreed five minutes.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has brought an incalculable sum of comfort, relief and dignity to people being abused or threatened. It has changed the world. While human rights abuses are reported by the media every day, this constant stream of reports is itself a tribute to the Universal Declaration and to the international human rights movement it helped spawn.

Today is a day to honour those who suffered and those who fought and made their suffering a cause. We congratulate the winners of the Human Rights Prizes this year, particularly as the presentation coincided with yesterday's adoption of the Declaration on human rights defenders.

The Universal Declaration is also a statement on the nature of man. From its opening article, it recalls the spirit of liberty, equality and fraternity, and it draws sustenance from all ethical traditions. India is proud to have left an imprint on the Declaration through Hansa Mehta, one of the few women delegates involved in the drafting process.

However, the ideals of the Declaration seem to mock the frailness of our ability to give them expression. Each article has a dissident counterpoint. Article 1 calls on all human beings to "act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood", and article 2 asserts that everyone is entitled to the rights under the Declaration without distinction of any kind, including race and colour and the status of the country to which a person belongs. However, racist attitudes and practices die hard. The world has seen horrific manifestations of distinctions made on the basis of religion.

Article 3 lays down that "Everyone has the right to life", but the treatment of human rights violations that have led to or could lead to massive loss of life depends almost entirely on power equations. Articles 6 and 14, respectively, lay down for everyone the "right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law" and "to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution". The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has repeatedly drawn attention to the erosion of the right of asylum, most notably where human rights are most ardently championed. Article 9 rules against subjection to "arbitrary arrest, detention or exile". Prominent actors on the world stage appear immune to this prohibition.

Articles 12 and 19, respectively, embody protection against attacks upon one's "honour and reputation" and the right to "receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". The developing world finds itself at the receiving end but can impart very little in the global communications dispensation. The balance between diverse points of

view, which is the essence of freedom, hardly exists, and is decaying very rapidly.

Closest to the aspirations of the vast mass of humanity is article 22, which speaks of the "national effort and international co-operation" through which everyone is entitled to realize the "economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality". This is where the Declaration has been found most wanting and where the greatest challenges lie. The dignity of the personality of a person is most compromised by poverty, and yet freedom from want — a fundamental right enshrined in the Declaration — has never been addressed as one of its essential underpinnings.

The universal observance of human rights will be difficult to attain in societies differentiated by gradations of affluence and want, surplus and despair. Most developing countries are in a process of change and modernization so rapid that it has become a revolution. They are struggling with the challenge of reducing in their societies the consequences of turbulence that come with revolutionary change. They need the enlightened appreciation of their more fortunate colleagues in the developed world. As Adam Smith noted, there is a dialectic between self-love and altruism. Though it is no surprise that the aggressive promotion of human rights in international forums comes from those countries that are the most self-satisfied, a larger dose of introspection and policies of meaningful assistance would be far more useful.

The stream of history cannot be segmented. The total suppression by colonialism of the fundamental human rights of peoples living in developing societies is not so distant a memory. Colonial subjugation had the abrogation of fundamental human rights as an essential precondition. The contribution of colonial arrangements to the affluence of the North is beyond computation. An enlightened approach to international cooperation cannot be based on historical restitution, but is not assisted by historical amnesia either.

The Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has argued that what was ignored in addressing the problem of famine was the acquirement problem: to avert a famine it was not enough that there should be food available; the population had to have the means to acquire the food. There is an equivalence between this and arguments on human rights. Those who claim that all that is needed is to erect a framework of laws do not address the question of how individuals acquire these rights.

My intention in making these points is not to query the value of our celebration today or cast a shadow over it. It is only to pose the conviction — and a warning, if you like — that the millennial challenge before us is to convert declarations into achievements.

Four questions appear to us to require most serious consideration. First, human rights is not just about converting the principles of the Declaration into law and implementing them. We need to create the political and economic environment in which the ideals enshrined in the Declaration could, through human agency, become a reality. At the same time, rights, by definition, have to be claimed. For that to happen people also need to know their rights. Human rights education should be strenuously promoted. In this context, we congratulate the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for today making the Declaration available on the Internet in more than 250 languages.

Secondly, how fully have we exploited the human potential of the "reason and conscience" (*article 1*) at the heart of the Declaration? We may have developed law and litigation at the expense of the ethical dimension.

Thirdly, while the principles of the Declaration evolved in the context of a certain relationship between the individual and the nation-state, the role and functions of the state are being eclipsed by the forces of globalization. How will we adapt the Universal Declaration to this new era? How can accountability be extended to market forces and actors that can undermine human rights?

Lastly, the sciences, particularly the life sciences, have made quantum leaps. For the first time, humankind has acquired the power to choose, reproduce, develop or suppress certain life forms. Suddenly Governments, research institutions, corporations and even scientists have an immense and ethically confusing power. How will we apply the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to this new era?

The universality of human rights will be truly promoted when lives everywhere are held in equal value. Whenever we react with different yardsticks, out of considerations of race, political strategy, or proximity to oneself, it constitutes a challenge to the universality of human rights and to fraternity and brotherhood. Let us use this occasion to engage in serious introspection about how we can achieve the promise of the Universal

Declaration. Let us not only lament what we have not fulfilled, but examine the reasons for our failures.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the formulation of which Egypt actively participated, represents a true product of the interaction of diverse cultures and civilizations and a major turning point in the history of humanity. It has become the philosophical basis and practical guide for the activities of the United Nations in the field of human rights, including the formulation and implementation of mandatory international legal instruments. The Declaration has changed the international conception of human rights to the point that these issues are no longer abstract ideas that are of interest only to those working in the field. The Universal Declaration has succeeded in projecting human rights issues as broad and multifaceted questions for everybody, *erga omnes*, and has become a reality that is dear to our hearts and present in our minds.

Today, half a century after its adoption, we must assess the extent to which the international community has committed itself to the contents of the Declaration, and what is required in the future in order to promote respect for human rights in general. A detailed examination of the respect shown for human rights in the contemporary world shows that such respect does not rise up to the expectations that prevailed when the Declaration was adopted.

We must acknowledge that the situation is not as positive as the founders expected it to be. It does meet the expectations of the international community at the threshold of the third millennium. It is true that some concrete progress has been achieved in many important areas, such as guaranteeing fundamental rights, the elimination of slavery, the prohibition of genocide, the elimination of racial discrimination and apartheid, the improvement of the conditions of refugees and the promotion of the rights of women and children and, finally, the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which will try crimes against the security and safety of humanity. However, in other important areas there has not been tangible progress; indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that in such areas human rights have suffered a setback.

Cultural, economic and social rights, particularly the right to development, have become subject to discrimination and have not been accorded the same importance as civil and political rights. Even those political and civil rights that have been the focus of interest for so long are now subject to serious violations, the most glaring example of which we are witnessing in the occupied Arab territories: the worst kind of occupation and dispersal and the denial of legitimate rights.

I also wish to refer to another very serious phenomenon in the international community: double standards. We see in certain cases that the standards of international legitimacy within the field of human rights are very strictly observed, while in other situations, which are no less serious or urgent, they are not. This double standard should be avoided as the next century begins.

Globalization, which has made the world an interrelated village, presupposes that international relations will be conducted on the same basis as relations that are conducted internally within societies, since democracy is part of a whole, and can be achieved only if soundly applied internally and internationally. The international community needs to crystallize a new vision, agreed to by all, that is commensurate with the requirements of our age. The protection of human rights in a converging world should be seen only from the point of view of international cooperation and within its framework. International cooperation should take into account the diversity and particularities of cultures, and in this context, we realize the importance of the Universal Declaration and its related documents, inspired by revealed religions. We believe that objective dialogue and genuine partnership between Governments and the components of the international community are important. Human rights, like all legal rules, are formulated in response to societal needs. Although the requirement of one society may vary from those of another, we have to tolerably accept these differences and to build upon them an integrated edifice for the protection of human rights everywhere.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is one of the most important items on the agenda of the General Assembly at its current session. Today, the international community has an opportunity not only to reconfirm the

historical and practical significance of this document, the adoption of which is rightly considered to be one of the outstanding achievements of the United Nations, but also to confirm that human rights issues are at the top of the current United Nations agenda, to analyse the successes and failures of the past and to view the prospects and set the goals for the future.

Our delegation would like to reconfirm here our country's steadfast adherence to the letter and the spirit of the Universal Declaration — a unique document that laid the foundation of the contemporary understanding of human rights and freedoms. Our country is attached to the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, and is a party to the most important international treaties in the field of the promotion and protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms. Rights proclaimed in the Declaration and reinforced in international covenants and conventions have become part of the Constitution and national legislation of Belarus.

The fundamental position of Belarus in the field of human rights is that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and that their protection remains the important duty of the State. We proceed from the understanding that democracy, as a political model, is one of the basic conditions for the full realization of human rights. Human beings and their rights and freedoms are the highest values and objectives of society and the State. Belarus is building a democratic society based on the supremacy of law, political pluralism and respect for human rights.

We are convinced that only constructive and straightforward dialogue, free from selectivity and double standards, close cooperation and a global approach to human rights on a fair and equal footing can contribute in practice to the improvement of human rights situations in any region of the world.

Belarus attaches great importance to the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A national committee for the commemoration of this important day has been established and a programme of appropriate events, based on educational activities, has been approved. The text of the Universal Declaration was printed today in all the national newspapers.

The parliamentary hearings on human rights were a very important event in public life in Belarus in 1998. They provided an opportunity to examine the main problems and priorities in this field and to define the tasks to be dealt with by all branches of government and elements of civil society.

The Government of Belarus also attaches great significance to the development of international cooperation in the field of human rights. It is symbolic that the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration is the year in which the Parliament of Belarus ratified the Commonwealth of Independent States convention on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Belarus actively cooperates on human rights issues with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is an effective mechanism for regional cooperation. Mutual obligations on promoting and protecting human rights are included in a number of bilateral treaties to which our country is a party.

The Government of Belarus attaches great importance to cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme in the framework of a technical assistance programme aimed at strengthening the potential of human rights activities and infrastructures in the human rights field.

All human rights for all: that theme of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is, indeed, the broadest definition of one of the most important tasks faced by the United Nations, by every State and by every person. Belarus is ready to make maximum efforts at the national level as well as in close cooperation with other States and international organizations for its implementation.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Guyana to make a statement on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): In the aftermath of the Second World War, the peoples of the world determined that they would tolerate no more man's cruel inhumanity to man. Accordingly, when their representatives met in San Francisco to create the United Nations, they resolved, in the Charter,

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights,
> in the dignity and worth of the human person,
> in the equal rights of men and women".

Evidently, they believed that such a reaffirmation would serve to enhance their peace and security and at the same time promote their economic and social development.

Although not present at the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the 14 countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, did not hesitate to subscribe to the Charter immediately upon their independence. They readily and fully embraced the purposes and principles embodied therein. Not surprisingly, their Constitutions and, indeed, all their governmental structures sought to incorporate full respect for and observance of the rights and freedoms of their people. At the international level, they have hastened to accede to all major conventions and treaties which seek to ensure the full enjoyment and exercise of these rights.

With the adoption 50 years ago of the Declaration of Human Rights, the international community made a major step towards fulfilling the provisions of the Charter. A great deal has been accomplished by way of promoting and protecting fundamental rights and freedoms.

Yet, despite such achievements, we cannot forget that for millions of people all over the world, the principles of the Universal Declaration remain an unfulfilled aspiration. The open civil conflicts which prevail in several countries of the world have resulted in egregious and systematic human rights violations and in serious threats to regional peace and development. Massive movements of refugee populations displaced as a result of these wars have created new humanitarian and human rights problems of unprecedented dimensions. The plight of women and children, particularly in situations of armed conflict, is now an issue of serious concern for the international community. The United Nations can and must do more to halt these horrendous abuses.

At the same time, the grave economic and social disparities which continue to widen the gap between the rich and the poor countries effectively withhold the basic rights of food, shelter, health care and work from millions of people. One consequence of this tragedy is that every day some 34,000 children under the age of five die as a result of malnutrition or preventable diseases. Moreover, as the United Nations Children's Fund tells us, in this year's *State of the World's Children* report, 130 million children of primary school age in developing countries, including 73 million girls, are growing up without basic education. With the denial of this essential right, yet another generation will be lost to poverty and underdevelopment.

Fully cognizant of the threat which widespread extreme poverty represents for the effective enjoyment of human rights, CARICOM Governments have invariably sought to attain a decent standard of living for their people. However, the burden of a huge external debt, dwindling resources and marginalization of our economies have forced many Governments to make hard choices, often resulting in harsher conditions for the poor. The United Nations, and more particularly the international financial institutions, must be more attentive to the negative impact which this economic and social deterioration has on the lives of ordinary people. To eradicate poverty, undoubtedly the single most important obstacle to the full implementation of human rights, there must be general recognition of the right to development as an intrinsic component of economic, social and cultural rights. Effective action must be taken so that developing countries can reach their economic goals through the establishment of a more just and equitable international economic order. A determined effort must be made to achieve the aim of halving global poverty by the year 2015. Only by so doing can we hope to realize the promise of betterment which the new millennium holds for all peoples.

CARICOM member States also take the view that human rights can thrive only in a democratic environment. We are therefore committed to people-centred development through which our citizens can be educated about their rights as well as their obligations. We do not believe, as many seem to argue, that there are inherent and inevitable tensions or conflicts between the rights of people and the rights of States. In a democracy, both the people and the State must cooperate to ensure the creation of conditions in which human rights can flourish. There is therefore in the Caribbean an ongoing dialogue between democratically elected Governments and their social partners on how best they can work to that end.

As States which believe that rule of law is essential to full respect for human rights, CARICOM countries welcome the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a necessary adjunct to the Universal Declaration. This Court can offer reliable legal machinery for the protection of human rights throughout the world. Similarly, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has an important role to play in developing greater awareness of human rights obligations. We therefore look forward to the development of these two institutions so that they can be properly equipped to discharge the responsibilities

entrusted to them. For their part, in an effort to enhance their own protection at the regional level, CARICOM countries have moved closer to the creation of a Caribbean court of justice to provide a common forum of appeal for our citizens.

Let me, in conclusion, assure the Assembly that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains as relevant and important to the Caribbean countries as it was at the time it was adopted. Its principles continue to provide all Governments with a yardstick by which they may measure their effectiveness in serving the best interests of their peoples. On occasion we may be found wanting in some areas, and we will need to do more to reach the universal goal of responsibility. The fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration, coming as it does at a psychologically significant moment close to the dawn of the third millennium, offers us all an opportunity to again place human rights high on the list of our international and national agendas. Our CARICOM countries will certainly not fail to seize the occasion to do so.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Hosani (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Our commemoration today of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a critical recommitment by the international community to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms so as to make the enjoyment of human rights a reality for every inhabitant on this planet.

In spite of our forward-looking vision of the nature of the international work in this field, which we all expressed in the 1993 Vienna Programme of Action, and although this vision formed the institutional framework for any comprehensive objective assessment of the mechanisms and efforts for the balanced and fair protection of universal human rights, which are indivisible and inalienable, we still feel deep anxiety about the continuation of the blatant violations of human rights in several regions of the world, especially those areas still plagued by internal conflicts and regional divisions. These divisions have taken the form of growing violence, genocide and ethnic cleansing, and they accentuate the problems of war refugees.

The supremacy of law is a vital element in the containment of conflicts and the protection of civil, cultural, social, political and economic rights; but it is also a prerequisite for sustainable development and stability. Therefore, we feel it important to support the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which should be coordinated with the other activities of the United Nations in peacekeeping and in the promotion of economic and other rights.

We in the United Arab Emirates — a State that has striven since its inception to uphold respect for human rights and commitment to the laws governing these rights, in accordance with the tolerant Islamic religion's concept of man as the noblest of creations, for whom God created all that is in heaven and on earth — we would like to affirm our rejection of double standards in matters of human rights and interference in domestic affairs, especially when these rights are exploited in the service of narrow political objectives relevant to the interests of some States. We also support the right of peoples to self-determination as an integral part of humanitarian international law. Our support goes also to those peoples under colonial domination in their just struggle against all forms of occupation practices.

We also realize the importance of supporting international humanitarian efforts for the supremacy of human rights on the basis of the Charter and the various obligations provided for in international instruments on human rights, while taking into consideration the particularities of each society, its history, heritage and national interests. In so doing, we reaffirm the importance of the international community's adoption of a comprehensive, coordinated approach consisting of plans and strategies aimed at dealing with the basic causes of violations of human rights, especially those that compromise human dignity — including famine, poverty, disease, backwardness and violence — so as to guarantee justice and development for all of humankind.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of El Salvador.

Mr. Castaneda-Cornejo (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Today the international community is commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of one of the most important events of this century — the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On 10 December 1948, as the international community was beginning to put behind it the horrors of the Second World War — the destruction and loss of millions of lives that marked the existence of several generations — it restated the vision that human beings had of themselves and their milieu and of the responsibilities that States should shoulder to defend human dignity. Fifty years later, all States, peoples and nations that we represent

and belong to accept the universality and validity of the rights recognized in that far-reaching Declaration, which is a Magna Carta for the whole of humankind.

In the context of this commemoration, it is relevant to recognize that the current concept of human rights is based on overcoming obstacles that impeded the universal recognition of human dignity, the acceptance of the diversity and plurality of human beings and peoples, the broadening and enrichment of the collective conscience by disseminating and implementing principles based on tolerance, freedom, democracy, cooperation, solidarity and peace. We must also state that much of the progress achieved is owed to people who have given their lives to create a more just and humane world — heroes to whom we pay a well-deserved tribute.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, based on the intrinsic dignity of every man and woman, marks the beginning of a process unprecedented in the history of humankind — the recognition and acceptance of a set of rules and guarantees inherent in the human condition and in the creation of a universal system to protect and promote human rights. The Universal Declaration, the consolidation of human rights and their inclusion in national and international agendas are, to our mind, the most important historical legacy of the twentieth century. This legacy, the result of half a century's work, is unfortunately also marked by a past of violence and intolerance. Many of our countries have seen the emergence of democracy and the establishment of rule of law after painful crises and irreparable loss of human life. The path for countries such as El Salvador has not been an easy one, but our difficult experience has served the promotion and defence of the common cause of human rights, through efforts both collective and individual.

In recent history, the international community has also witnessed atrocities that have shaken the conscience of nations. We have seen the emergence of the spectre of genocide and intolerance, just when we were experiencing the enthusiasm of a new era of hope. These events and the new world situation should lead us to think about what values the international community should strengthen in dealing with human rights as a part of the United Nations agenda — values that would prevent confrontation and politicization, focus upon cooperation and international solidarity and champion respect for and the defence of human rights, wherever they might be violated.

Humankind had to wait until the middle of the twentieth century for the emergence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Fifty years later, the evolution of its principles and tenets and the emergence of international human rights law as one of the fastest-changing branches of law have led to the creation and adoption of a set of instruments and mechanisms for monitoring, promoting and protecting human rights at the international, regional and national levels.

The International Bill of Human Rights, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Declaration on the Right to Development and other instruments on human rights provide the necessary framework and indispensable tools for striking a proper balance and moving into the next millennium with renewed hope.

Now is the time to make a reality of the principles and aspirations that inspired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The commemoration of its anniversary should set the guidelines for revitalizing the political and moral commitment our Governments have made to making progress in this direction. As indicated in the annual report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the progress of nations, a day will come when the progress of nations will be measured not by their military or economic power, or by the splendour of their capitals and their public buildings, but rather by the well-being of their peoples, by their levels of health, nutrition and education, by their opportunities to receive proper remuneration for their work, by their ability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives, by respect for their civil and political liberties, by care given to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged and by the protection given to the physical and mental development of their sons and daughters.

This individual and collective effort that we, the peoples of the United Nations, make will be a successful and effective contribution to the arrival of that day of hope and to the creation of a real culture of peace, which is essential to ensuring universal respect for human rights.

Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus): As we approach the new millennium, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emerges as a guiding beacon for conduct by countries and people in the sacred cause of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Declaration represents the common realization of the peoples of this planet that human rights are paramount, indivisible and universal. It is a yardstick that takes into account the diversity of our

world, creating a common denominator that transcends civilizations, cultures and belief systems.

I take this opportunity to join the Secretary-General in paying tribute to those dedicated people whose relentless efforts produced this landmark document. I also bow my head in respectful memory to the countless victims of human rights abuses.

The Universal Declaration established the principle that the protection of human rights is a matter of legitimate international concern. It consolidated the efforts of the international community to create a comprehensive system whose objective is the safeguarding of the values that inspired the founding fathers of the United Nations: freedom, justice and peace in the world. Since 1948, numerous international and regional human rights instruments have been adopted, and tremendous progress has been made towards the achievement of the Declaration's noble aims. The proliferation of human rights instruments and the impressive achievements in mainstreaming human rights in all societies testify to that.

We note with satisfaction that the protection of individual human rights and freedoms has developed in parallel with the progressive development of international law. We are encouraged by the denunciation of the use of force in international relations and the rejection of the occupation of territories and their annexation by the occupying Power. We also welcome the increasing insistence of the international community on the right of refugees to return to their homes in full enjoyment of their right to property.

Over the last 50 years, our world has witnessed tremendous changes, from the confrontation of the cold war with its spectre of nuclear annihilation and intense clash of ideologies to a world where new alliances are being shaped, fuelled by the need for economic development in an increasingly interdependent and highly competitive international environment. The new conflicts have demonstrated that we have a long way to go to fully realize the aims of the Declaration. Intolerance, whether religious or ethnic, has manifested itself in new forms with gross violations of human rights of a kind that we had hoped would remain buried in the past. These conflicts — fully utilizing the psychology of terror on the civilian population, with the abhorrent phenomenon of "ethnic cleansing" preeminent among the elements of this terror — have presented new challenges to the international community in its efforts to create the conditions for achieving the aim of a better world for all.

In this respect, we welcome the development of international legal instruments whose objective is to enforce humanitarian law and to prosecute violators of human rights. We reiterate our support for the speedy establishment of the International Criminal Court and for efforts to reinforce human rights mechanisms.

As President Clerides has stated, Cyprus regards this anniversary as particularly significant since the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of its people continue to be subjected to gross and ruthless violations resulting from the Turkish invasion and from the continuing forcible division of our country in flagrant violation of United Nations principles and resolutions.

As a Member State fully committed to the ideals upon which this Organization was founded and to the aims of the Universal Declaration, Cyprus seizes upon this joyous celebration to reaffirm its staunch commitment to the cause of human rights and to securing the Declaration's objectives. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our conviction that respect for the rule of law and human rights for all people, regardless of race, religion, language or gender, remain the solid foundation for harmonious relations among States.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call next on the representative of Kazakhstan.

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakhstan): On this auspicious day of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Kazakhstan reaffirms its commitment to the spirit and the letter of that historic instrument. The significance of the Declaration is hard to overestimate. It has become the fundamental document of the twentieth century in the sphere of human rights. The provisions of the Universal Declaration have been incorporated into the constitutions of many States of the world, including independent Kazakhstan, and have influenced the subsequent development of international law.

The contribution of the United Nations to the implementation of the principles of the Universal Declaration is truly significant. The integration of human rights issues into all aspects of United Nations activity translates the implementation of those rights to the practical level. In this context, Kazakhstan notes with satisfaction and gratitude the active and purposeful work of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson.

The significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for the assertion of democratic values and the rule of law is not something transient. In his congratulatory message addressed to the Secretary-General on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, emphasized that this is of special importance for the newly independent States that have embarked on the course of democratic development, including Kazakhstan.

It is indisputable that the road to mature democracy, which many States have taken centuries to travel, is a long and difficult one. In those countries where democracy already existed and at certain historical stages — for example, after the Second World War — was suppressed, its revival was not such a difficult matter. But in Kazakhstan, where democratic institutions in the modern sense did not exist, this process began virtually from scratch. Seven years ago, having set out on the road to democracy, Kazakhstan began to make considerable efforts to carry out political reforms whose ultimate aim is to ensure the rights and freedoms of each citizen of our multiethnic republic; we continue those efforts today. These rights are fully embodied in the Constitution, which reflects international standards in the sphere of human rights.

Recently, the President of Kazakhstan initiated new steps for the intensification of the democratic transformation in such important spheres as elections, political parties, parliament, civil society, the judicial system and the mass media. The raising of democracy to the level of State policy is a significant new step in the establishment of a civil society. It is noteworthy that these steps have been reinforced by Kazakhstan's accession this year to a further four United Nations conventions in the field of human rights. Currently, Kazakhstan is a party to 18 multilateral international treaties regulating various aspects of human-rights-protection activities. With the development of our country's political and socio-economic potential, the issue of Kazakhstan's accession to the International Covenants on human rights is also becoming topical, and we are beginning that process.

All of these measures, in the context of the political reforms that are under way, are aimed at further protecting and guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of every citizen of our multiethnic society, which consists of representatives of more than 100 ethnic groups. We shall do everything possible to preserve such values as inter-ethnic harmony and the multiplicity of cultures and customs of the various ethnic groups making up the people of Kazakhstan. We shall strengthen pluralism in society for the purpose of reliably guaranteeing freedom of conscience, speech and the press, and of further strengthening the foundations of a secular democratic society based on tolerance and mutual respect.

A logical step to strengthen international cooperation was the signing in December this year of the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Kazakhstan and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on the opening of an OSCE centre in Almaty, which is to take place early in 1999. Another important bilateral document signed recently was the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Kazakhstan and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on the expansion of cooperation in the field of human rights.

We are convinced that this cooperation will make an important contribution to the legal development of our State, which is aligning its actions with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As we commemorate Human Rights Day together with the world community, Kazakhstan will continue to extend the necessary support to the noble activity of the United Nations in the implementation of the lofty principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Paraguay.

Mr. Pappalardo (Paraguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): At today's meeting, the United Nations is commemorating the important occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of one of the most important international instruments in history — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — which establishes a common standard for the progress of all peoples and nations and which has been and continues to be a source of inspiration and a basis for progress in the sphere of human rights.

Fifty years ago, in the city that was the cradle of the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity, 58 States Members of the Organization, including Paraguay, expressed their shared ideals and thoughts about fundamental human rights. This Magna Carta for all humanity, as it has been rightly called, represented a milestone in the long struggle for human rights.

Fifty years ago in Paris, my delegation called the Declaration a beam of light in the history of mankind. Since then, that light has inspired the defence and promotion of the rights of individuals and peoples, enshrining them in the legislation of each country and its constitution, as it has in Paraguay.

At the national level, we can assert that much progress has been made since February 1989, when Paraguay regained democracy, the proclamation of which was based on the onset of democratization and respect for human rights. Thus, securing democracy and preparing the groundwork for the full enjoyment of human rights became the keystones of the transition process and the consolidation of democracy.

The Republic of Paraguay has acceded to and ratified most instruments on the promotion, defence and protection of human rights, both in the United Nations and in the Organization of American States. Among these are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the almost universal Convention on the Rights of the Child. To this, we might add our recognition of the jurisdictions of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 1993 and of the International Court of Justice in 1996. Moreover, recently in Rome, Italy, we signed the Statute establishing the International Criminal Court.

We welcome yesterday's adoption by the Assembly of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, otherwise known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. We pay tribute to all those individuals and organizations that, throughout these years, have committed themselves to promoting and protecting human rights. I also wish to emphasize the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We reiterate here my country's support for and commitment to the work of Mrs. Mary Robinson, whose burden is very heavy.

As part of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration, the Government of the Republic of Paraguay has included the subject of human rights on our country's school curriculums and has incorporated it into the educational reform being undertaken by the Government to ensure a culture of respect for the dignity of the human person and to educate in truth with honesty. In tribute, we have decided to assign the honorific "Fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" to this year's graduating class from educational institutions, state and private, at various levels of education in our country.

I also wish to recall that the delegation of Ecuador, in its statement in Paris in 1948, indicated that the best way to determine whether the Declaration was incomplete or unsatisfactory was undoubtedly to allow time to pass and to judge it later, according to the results it had achieved.

Half a century later, we can rightly say that the achievements have been many. A large number of potential victims of violations and vulnerable groups have come under the protection of laws adopted in this respect. Apartheid belongs to the past. Awareness of the need to respect democracy and the rule of law has never been as widespread as it is today.

We know, however, that, despite these achievements, human rights violations continue to take place at an alarming rate. The world continues everywhere, in North and South alike, to witness discrimination, summary execution, torture and the denial of fundamental rights. Sadly, pain and violence, armed conflict, disease, illiteracy and poverty are common today. In many parts of the world, women and children continue to fall victim to countless acts of abuse, injustice and discrimination. Children are exploited and victimized in armed conflicts.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, the road ahead is long and the challenge great. The most pressing task before us today with respect to human rights is the practical implementation of agreed norms. This obligation falls mainly to national Governments, civil society and the international community.

On 10 December 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, the delegation of Paraguay expressed its unstinting support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which expresses mankind's real *raison d'être*.

Today, on 10 December 1998, Paraguay reaffirms this belief and reiterates its commitment to redoubling its efforts to promote understanding of and respect for the rights enshrined in the Declaration and other international instruments and declarations adopted later. We pledge to

continue to work to make the slogan "All human rights for all" a reality for present and future generations.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Today, we commemorate 50 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Uruguay joins in the celebration with great fervour, clear conviction and determination to pursue the road towards achieving the goals that have been set.

On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly, at its third session in Paris, proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by 48 votes in favour to none, with eight abstentions. Thus, three years after the signing in San Francisco of the constituent Charter of the United Nations on 26 June 1945, a necessary stipulation of Article I was complied with:

> "[P]romoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion".

From that day to this, a series of treaties, agreements and resolutions of various bodies of the international community have been adopted, creating an entire system for developing an effective mechanism to prevent violations of essential human rights. The latest such text, recently adopted in Rome and for which our country voted in favour, created the International Criminal Court. Once it has begun its work, the Court will be one of the most important instruments for preventing human rights violations and punishing their perpetrators. Uruguay is part of this whole mechanism at both the international and regional levels. It has ratified or adhered to the various international and regional agreements and has voted in favour of resolutions and decisions in these spheres.

It therefore seems that after legislating on this issue at the international level for 50 years, the framework and instruments necessary for the promulgation, definition and defence of human rights have been established and that the time is ripe for reflection. Accordingly, we must ask ourselves where we should focus our future action in order to achieve the desired goal of not seeing new violations of human rights in the world on a daily basis.

Humanity has made much progress in the defence of human rights in the course of the last 50 years, but we must also accept the fact that much yet remains to be done. We therefore believe that this is the appropriate juncture and opportunity to pause for reflection in order to find an answer regarding our future action. In this regard, we believe that there is no better course of action than to return to our foundations — to our roots — as clearly expressed in the purposes and principles of our Organization, which remain fully valid. We believe that they provide the indissoluble relationship that exists and should exist between human rights and the maintenance of peace, between human rights and development, and between human rights and education — all within the framework of the full exercise of a democratic system of government.

The maintenance of peace is the first purpose set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. This purpose thus became the foundation upon which the rest of the Charter's objectives were to be constructed. Without peace there cannot be development or free exercise and observance of basic rights. Like peace between States, peace within States — internal order — is also necessary, for without it undertaking any government action to advance these purposes will also not be possible. This is why the maintenance of peace, both internationally and domestically, is a priority of my country's international and domestic policy and why we have supported all along all the United Nations resolutions aimed at that goal, particularly all those that promote general and complete disarmament.

However, it will be very difficult to maintain peace without a minimum degree of development that brings about the well-being of populations. In this connection, international cooperation, which is another of the purposes of the Charter, is therefore vital and should be aimed essentially at those States whose domestic policy priorities include genuine distribution of wealth among their inhabitants. We do not think that it contributes to the maintenance of domestic internal order to foster rich States with poor populations.

We also believe that there cannot be genuine and effective development or realization of human rights without a well-defined educational policy. We are referring not only to education and dissemination of information on human rights in particular, but to education in general. Human rights can be propagated if society has a minimum degree of ability to learn. Our efforts should therefore be aimed at achieving levels of general education among populations so that they can understand the meaning and force of human rights. It should be up to citizens themselves to defend their own

essential rights. Education should begin in the family itself, which should teach and give an example to children so that they can enter society with a minimum level of instruction with regard to respect and mutual tolerance vis-à-vis their peers.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, we must recognize that there can be no full exercise of human rights if peace, development and education are not part of a democratic system of government. Without democracy there will be no peace, development with justice, free education or full exercise of human rights. We are talking about genuine democracy and a system of government in which there is a clear separation of powers — the legislative, executive and judicial. We are referring to a State where the functions of its leaders are limited by the rights that are freely legislated by its own citizens. We are referring to a system of government in which political parties have been established spontaneously and freely by citizens. Without political parties there can be no democracy. They are and should continue to be the conduits of public opinion and the legitimate representatives through which public opinion is expressed.

In the final analysis, we understand that future action should be focused on the quest for and defence of the values that are essential to and inseparable from the full observance and exercise of human rights: peace, democracy, development and education. All of this should proceed in accordance with the principles spelt out in the Charter: the sovereign equality of all Members, good faith in the fulfilment of commitments undertaken, the peaceful settlement of disputes, abstention from the use and threat of use of force and respect for non-intervention in affairs that are essentially within the internal jurisdiction of States.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Najem (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me to begin by recalling that Lebanon played a role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, whose fiftieth anniversary we are commemorating today. I also have the pleasure to affirm that the Constitution, laws and political system of Lebanon enshrine human rights and citizens' rights as recognized in our contemporary world. Lebanon's system has adopted political pluralism, just as it fully respects the freedom of the press and the right of the individual to express his opinion. Lebanon organizes democratic elections for all its constitutional institutions, including the Parliament, the presidency of the Republic and the administrative councils.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a response to the tragic suffering of millions of human beings throughout history. It is a document whose purpose is to protect the dignity and basic rights of human beings. The fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights offers us an opportunity to evaluate humankind's commitment to the rules and basic principles agreed by Governments and States with a view to eliminating injustice and repression.

However, 50 years after the 1948 adoption of that Declaration, human rights violations continue to take place throughout the world in the form of racist practices including, first and foremost, policies of "ethnic cleansing" and collective displacement, whatever their origins may be; occupation; detention; the expulsion of peoples from their homes; the taking of hostages; the imposition of sieges; and the creation of settlements, which deprive people of their fundamental rights. The only language used by the occupier is one of massacre, expulsion, oppression and suppression of freedom, thought and expression.

The world also continues to distinguish between basic human rights and freedoms in the political, social, economic and cultural fields. Although the overall situation is gloomy because of the instances of poverty, hunger and oppression, particularly in the southern hemisphere, which is a serious offence to human dignity, the charters and international conventions elaborated during this period to deal with human rights reflect considerable intellectual, juridical and political achievements. The ultimate objective of our sustained efforts must be to muster political will and strengthen legal instruments in order to implement internationally agreed principles and agreements in the service of human rights and human dignity.

Legislators, intellectuals, diplomats, politicians and statesmen have endeavoured to elaborate an international legal framework on human rights, and hence we have seen the promulgation of international, national and regional agreements codifying human rights, with the goal of ensuring respect for and compliance with them.

Humankind aspires to ensure that in future the concept of human rights becomes an integral part of political decision-making at the local, regional and international levels. This will lead to qualitative changes, not only in the way various types of national, regional and international institutions work, but also will have a

direct effect on international relations and their underlying philosophy.

The world is moving towards the uniformization of the criteria, instruments and objectives involved in bringing about the ultimate manifestation of mankind's humanity and allowing the individual to flourish. We should in the near future realize humankind's right to development, a goal whose achievement some are still impeding. What is needed here is an international consensus in addition to the other rights that have already been approved and adopted. Joint efforts to eliminate human rights violations, wherever they arise, involve collective responsibility on the part of States, Governments and civil society. We look forward to an integrated effort which would consolidate respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the years and decades to come.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to state at the outset that I am speaking on behalf of the members of the Organization of African Unity.

Fifty years have elapsed since men and women of goodwill, traumatized by the horrors of war and determined to prevent such atrocities from happening again, adopted in Paris — the homeland of liberty as envisioned by the revolutionaries of 1789 — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The great originality of that Declaration is that, though it does not have the legally binding nature of a convention *stricto sensu*, it has gradually gained strength because of its relevance and its humanistic ambition — despite the fact that immediately following its adoption it seemed to be but a high-minded wish list. Tribute must be paid to the United Nations, the broad range of associations and organizations and the people of every stripe who have fought to translate respect for human rights into reality. While the two conventions that accompany the Declaration — the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights — have not been fully implemented, awareness has nonetheless grown to such an extent that, in the case of Africa, for instance, almost all basic legislation refers to them.

Legal mechanisms geared to safeguarding human rights are gaining strength. An example is the establishment of penal tribunals such as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which hear cases that involve crimes against human dignity. The most recent achievement in this area was clearly the establishment of the International Criminal Court, whose work will have a decisive impact on respect for human rights.

Africa, as history has so clearly shown, is the continent that has suffered the most from human rights violations. Slavery and the abasement, humiliation and inhuman treatment it inflicted relegated black people to a subhuman level. Colonization, which the administering Powers attempted to disguise as a civilizing mission, revealed its true nature through regimes under which colonized peoples could be moulded and subjugated at will.

Africa has also had the bitter experience of intolerance and racism, the culmination of which was surely the scourge of apartheid, whose official abolition does not mean that it has been totally eradicated. Let us take care: slaveholders, racial supremacists and modern-day slave traders are still among us, conjuring up the spectre of immigration or expounding on the evils of multiracial coexistence.

It is understandable, therefore, that Africa should be deeply concerned first and foremost with human rights, not only because it can serve as an example in this area but because, having experienced the most degrading conditions possible for human beings, it is determined to champion respect for human rights. This has led to the establishment of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and more recently of the African court on human rights, as well as to various national human rights movements throughout the continent. But human rights also means respect for women in the fullness of their dignity. It means protecting children against abuse and social corruption. It means accepting the incapable and the handicapped as whole human beings. It means understanding and making others understand that the poor, the hungry or the sick have a right to assistance; it is not a matter of favours or commiseration.

The twentieth century has basically been one of the denial of human rights, which have been flouted by the emergence of materialistic and totalitarian ideologies which made liberal use of torture, imprisonment, gulags and brainwashing. After so much distress and

degradation, the twenty-first century must be one for rehabilitating respect for the human beings' intrinsic value.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now call on the Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland, Mr. Janusz Stańczyk.

Mr. Stańczyk (Poland): On the day of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, allow me to stress the quite extraordinary evolution of human rights ideas and principles in internal and international relations. I remind the Assembly that the United Nations Charter contains only trace references to human rights. Three years after the signing of the Charter, the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — a document lacking the binding force of an international treaty. Few people believed it could change the world. But from the very beginning, human rights and their protection and promotion provided a unique stimulus to the growth of international law and the evolution of international relations understood as politics among nations. Human rights issues rapidly ceased to be the domain of international law alone. They became an object of the policy of States and action by social movements, including an ever-growing number of increasingly powerful non-governmental organizations, as well as a focus of mass-media attention. Let me stress that human rights developed into a prominent factor of international relations and in the post-cold-war period have become a basic element of the nascent international order.

The defenders of human rights ideas and principles — intellectuals, politicians, leaders of non-governmental organizations — shared the view that respect for the rights embodied in the Declaration does not by itself guarantee for people freedom of choice and expression or their free development. That is why, since the adoption of the Declaration in 1948, an impressive body of international law has been enacted, comprising binding instruments such as the International Covenants on Human Rights and Conventions on torture, racism and discrimination against women — instruments without which human rights would be merely declaratory. As a representative of Poland, I am proud that my country initiated one of these legal regulations — the Convention on the Rights of the Child — protecting the youngest human inhabitants of our planet. A comprehensive system of human rights mechanisms — such as special rapporteurs, experts, working groups and, above all, treaty-monitoring bodies — have also been established.

My delegation remains convinced that all the elements of the expanded United Nations apparatus dealing with human rights — that is, the Commission on Human Rights and its mechanisms, as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office — are equally important and should be synergetically linked with one another. All of them should closely cooperate with the non-governmental organizations. We consider it particularly important that the High Commissioner and the mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights, including the special rapporteurs, be able to rely on the full cooperation of Member States for not only declaratory but also effective support.

Allow me to confirm again that the Government of the Republic of Poland remains dedicated to supporting all the efforts directed at strengthening the preventive capacities of the Commission on Human Rights. Let me also stress that my Government places great hope in the mission of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson. While commending her on her achievements to date, we pledge her our continuous support in her difficult and noble task.

P. ogress in the implementation of human rights standards has not been devoid of problems. We are still confronted with opposition by many States to the universalization of human rights and to the expansion of protective institutions. Many States remain beyond the reach of any instruments of human rights protection, while some of them refer to particularism in the approach to human rights, thus challenging the universal standards being set at the United Nations.

We have no doubt that the battle for human rights ideals and principles is far from over. We know that further efforts by the international community are necessary if Governments are to accept basic standards of human rights and recognize that their effective protection is possible only when perpetrators of human rights violations know that they will be held accountable for their actions.

The United Nations human rights implementation strategy should be dedicated to promoting an extensive programme of technical assistance and advisory services directed at all countries that need them and that are willing to cooperate with the United Nations. The High Commissioner for Human Rights should be equipped with adequate budgetary, organizational and human capabilities to match the magnitude and diversity of needs.

The world has came a long way since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Totalitarian systems and systems based on racial discrimination have been overthrown in the name of human rights. The catalogue of rights has been expanded. Despite various kinds of regional, cultural and ideological resistance, the recognition of human rights is gradually becoming universal. The lack of observance of human rights can no longer be shielded from criticism and condemnation by the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. We welcome this revolutionary development, a qualitatively new feature of the international order for which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has laid the foundations.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany): Let me, at the outset, express my full support for the statement made by my Austrian colleague on behalf of the European Union.

When, in 1948, United Nations representatives from all parts of the world adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they wanted to give an answer to the unprecedented atrocities of the Second World War — genocide, annihilation of livelihoods, mass expulsions. The Declaration was a sign of hope after years of tyranny and oppression. It recognized the inherent dignity and worth of the human person and proclaimed the ideal of every member of the human family living free from fear and want.

Today, 50 years later, much has been achieved. But we have to admit that for many people the stipulations of the Declaration are still far from being a reality. None of us can say that in his or her country there is no room for improvement. We cannot claim that after all these years of hard work the noble goals of the Universal Declaration have been reached.

We have to build upon what we have achieved. For example, numerous new or restored democracies have proved that respect for human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law, on the one hand, and social and economic development, on the other hand, are inseparably linked, and that due respect for human rights has made them less susceptible to detrimental external influences.

Yesterday, we adopted the Declaration on human rights defenders. The Declaration will be a document of reference for the numerous groups and individuals who tirelessly, often at the risk of their own lives, speak up both for respect for human rights and for victims of human rights violations. This morning we awarded the United Nations Human Rights Prizes to outstanding human rights defenders. My Government pays tribute to those heroes of our day.

The year 1998 was also key in the fight against impunity, one of the root causes of continuing worldwide human rights violations. International law is rapidly developing in this field. For the first time ever, a defendant was convicted of genocide by an international tribunal.

The adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court in July sent another important signal. It was a major step forward towards a world order in which the force of law, not the law of force, prevails. Human rights violators are becoming increasingly aware that there are fewer and fewer safe havens and that the vicious circle of impunity is being broken.

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in Paris, Germany, as an "enemy State", was absent. Poland abstained, and so did South Africa. I am glad that these three countries, after having overcome their nightmares of national socialism, of communism and of apartheid, have now joined their efforts in a group initiative to make their specific contribution to the promotion of human rights. So far, Poland, South Africa and Germany have organized, in close cooperation, three international symposiums in which numerous Government, United Nations and non-governmental organization experts participated.

The three countries also played their role in the preparation of the resolution on the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was adopted unanimously by the Assembly this morning. I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to you, Mr. President, for your readiness to present the draft of that resolution to the General Assembly as your own, as a President's text, thus effectively highlighting the importance of the commitment undertaken by the Member States to fulfil without any reservation the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize what is at the heart of the Declaration: human rights — all human rights — are not presented to mankind by States out of generosity. No; human rights are inherent in every single human being, without exception and distinction. Every human being is entitled to those human rights, and it is

our duty, not our choice, to respect, promote and protect them.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, Mr. Jacques Baudin.

Mr. Baudin (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): Senegal associates itself fully and unreservedly with the statement made by the representative of Burkina Faso on behalf of the Organization of African Unity.

In commemorating today the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we reaffirm our shared conviction that there is an imprescriptible need to build, together, a pluralistic, democratic, peaceful, open and tolerant society. As Mr. Henri Laugier, former member of the Commission on Human Rights, stressed:

> "The 1948 Declaration is a mobilization of the universal conscience for the defence of all human values that are arrayed around the word 'freedom'".

In this respect, I can say without hesitation that the Declaration has definitely contributed to the process of emancipation and decolonization and thereby fostered the emergence of a new international order. Some of its articles also made their political mark on the two International Covenants of 1966, and even on the concept of the right to development. The 1948 Declaration thus eloquently enshrines three principles: rule of law, human rights and development.

The first International Conference on Human Rights, held in Tehran in 1967, and the Conference that took place in Vienna in June 1993, confirmed our common support for the principles of the Declaration of 1948, which are the universality, interdependence and indivisibility of human rights. The actions of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the initiatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, fit within that collective dynamic, and their remarkable work deserves a solemn tribute here today.

The role of the United Nations in the context of the promotion of the right to development and the struggle against poverty should be strengthened to allow all human beings to live a decent life. Today, aware of the insufficiency of our actions and of our obligations over the past 50 years, we must make efforts to ensure that the international legal human rights instruments are signed, ratified and implemented by all Member States.

For the same reasons, we should also pay attention to respect for and promotion of the rights of the child and the struggle to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Nor should we forget the rights of the elderly, and in 1999 we will observe the International Year of Older Persons.

In another, equally important area, we must do everything possible to ensure that the Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in July in Rome, enters into force as quickly as possible. Senegal, the first State to sign the Statute of the Court, intends to be among the first to deposit the instruments of ratification.

My country co-sponsored the draft resolution on the Declaration on the rights and responsibilities of human rights defenders. That Declaration, which constitutes a genuine charter of the rights and duties of all the bodies of civil society, stresses the need for fruitful cooperation and dialogue to be promoted among the non-governmental organizations, other actors of civil society and Governments.

It is thus our responsibility to implement the Declaration and to promote human rights education.

Following the guidelines of His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic, Senegal has already begun teaching human rights and international humanitarian law in training schools, including those for personnel of the armed forces, the security services and the paramilitary corps. Moreover, my country, which is a party to virtually all international legal instruments on human rights, has established an interministerial committee for human rights and international humanitarian law, one of whose main tasks is to ensure compliance with our international commitments in this sphere.

All of here in this sanctuary of the collective international conscience, from which all self-righteousness must be banished, should look back and maintain this truth for the future, as a credo: The art of engaging in good rhetoric must not preclude the art of doing good and complying with our commitments. Thus can we make up our delays, rectify our omissions and correct our errors. Then the third millennium can be one of human dignity, equality and prosperity.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): Today we solemnly celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a time

for reaffirming our commitment to and achievements in the promotion and protection of human rights over the past 50 years. This is also the right occasion for calm analysis and critical review of remaining obstacles and shortcomings with respect to what can be done to further the human rights cause. Our delegation welcomes the adoption today by the General Assembly of the resolution entitled "Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and hopes that the present review will help us chart appropriate directions for our future activities based on genuine concern rather than polemic politics, on cooperation rather than confrontation.

Thanks to the tireless struggle of all oppressed peoples, the world has witnessed fundamental changes over the past 50 years. Many countries have gained their national independence and joined the United Nations, bringing the Organization's membership to a total of 185. In today's international affairs, the trend towards peace, democratization, independence and respect for human rights is well recognized.

In many areas of the world, however, underdevelopment continues to be the most serious threat to the effective enjoyment of human rights. According to James Gustave Speth, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, among the 4.4 billion people who live in developing countries, almost three fifths live in communities without basic sanitation, almost one third are without safe drinking water, a quarter lack adequate housing and a fifth are undernourished. Our common cause of human rights, including the right to development, thus demands further concerted efforts and strong commitment.

Five years ago, at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Member States made a thorough review of the protection, promotion and implementation of human rights. It was rightly emphasized that universality and specificity are two organically interrelated aspects of human rights, which do not exclude each other but instead coexist and interact closely. While human rights has a universal character, its expression and implementation in the national context should remain primarily within the competence and responsibility of each State; the complex variety of problems, the different economic, social and cultural realities and the unique value systems prevailing in each country should be taken into consideration. We firmly believe that cooperation on the basis of respect for sovereignty, dialogue in good faith and peaceful negotiation, rather than confrontation, conditionalities, the use or threat of use of force and interference in the internal affairs of other States, constitute the best way to promote and protect human rights.

On 30 November 1998, the National Assembly of Viet Nam celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yesterday, the Human Rights Research Centre at the Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy organized a seminar with the participation of many Vietnamese and foreign officials, scholars and research workers. On these occasions, Viet Nam reaffirmed that the most fundamental achievement in the Vietnamese people's struggle for human rights has been our success in winning the right to live in peace, national independence, unification and territorial integrity, and the right to make our own choice of political, social and economic development.

On the occasion of this highly significant celebration, let us all reaffirm our commitment to the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and continue our efforts to ensure that it remains a source of inspiration for the further promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms — political, economic, social, civil and cultural — including the right to development.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call next on the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Arda (Turkey): In the history of mankind there are few documents that stand the test of time and have an enduring effect on the organization and behaviour of societies and individuals. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted 50 years ago by the General Assembly, is one such document. It has charted a profound yet simple course for all of us. It recognized that, purely by virtue of their humanity, all human beings without distinction are entitled to all human rights.

The States Members of the United Nations did not come to that conclusion as a result of wishful thinking. It was a direct response to the human suffering that had been experienced before and the only course for a dignified way of life for all. Never before in international relations had States agreed to limit their right to exercise their authority over their own citizens and open themselves up to international scrutiny.

During the last 50 years, a body of human rights instruments has come into effect. The many ideas of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been translated into action and legislation across the board.

There is a greater awareness that human rights encompass not only civil and political rights, but also cultural, economic and social rights. The interdependence of all human rights is more evident today than ever.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents our common pledge to uphold and promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is explicitly inherent in the Declaration that the fulfilment of this universal pledge is not the responsibility of the States alone, but also of each and every group and individual. By the same token, the rights enshrined in the Declaration are not derived from the ties of an individual to a sovereign State. They are universal and absolute in nature. They can be subject to violation by every actor of society.

Human rights are a dynamic concept. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this concept has continuously evolved. The boundaries of human rights have expanded. New perceptions and complicated challenges have emerged. The importance of the role given to the United Nations in the Declaration has become more crucial.

Yet, after 50 years of substantial work, we are far from the ideal. In many parts of the world, there is growing poverty. Ethnic or religious conflicts are taking a huge human toll. The right to life is challenged in many parts of the world. Only recently, we have seen dramatic affronts to human dignity and rights. Underdevelopment and economic and social deprivation often blur our civil and political rights and render them meaningless. Such a situation erodes the moral basis of our solemn commitments.

Our commemoration today could have been better served by concrete action, rather than lofty rhetoric. We need a total commitment to the eradication of poverty and illiteracy. There must be an increasing international effort to promote ethnic and religious harmony and tolerance. Future generations must be assured that they will not be subject to discrimination.

Human rights are of concern and a challenge to all of us. This challenge must be met, not only with the arbitrary and random attention of a few, but through the collective action of all for the rule of law, transparency, the eradication of absolute poverty, and economic, social and cultural development.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mrs. Caba Camara (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights allows us to summarize the progress that has been made in the sphere of human rights, to assess their impact on the daily life of every individual and to propose new orientations to ensure that respect for human rights becomes a reality.

It cannot be denied that progress has been made in human rights codification, structures and mechanisms. The creation of international courts to judge war crimes and of the International Criminal Court in Rome will make it possible to seek redress and thus put an end to impunity. The 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action brought human rights into the democratic tradition and awareness has become widespread of the need to ensure their respect. Nonetheless, we must strive to implement the principles of non-selectivity and impartiality, which, sadly, have not yet been widely accepted.

The role of non-governmental organizations in promoting and defending human rights throughout the world is significant. They must not only sound the alarm, but contribute to the promotion of human rights by helping and advising the States.

Despite undeniable progress, flagrant and massive human rights violations, even genocide, continue to be perpetrated throughout the world. The international community has tirelessly condemned these violations and imposed sanctions in response to them, but not always with much success. It must, above all, seek the root causes of these violations and work to establish an environment conducive to respect for and the promotion of human rights.

Côte d'Ivoire has made the promotion and respect of human rights keystones of its domestic policy and has ratified the major international human rights instruments. It has co-sponsored all the resolutions aimed at promoting human rights.

The Constitution of Côte d'Ivoire is firmly rooted in democracy and free enterprise. As President Henri Konan Bédié said recently:

"Côte d'Ivoire is irrevocably committed to strengthening its state of law, the guarantor of freedoms and solidarity. This ideal defines our exacting and lofty concept of democracy. In this spirit, our Constitution proclaims as the most basic right the principle of defending human and civil rights, guaranteeing freedom of expression, opinion, religion and enterprise. Justice, the key institution of any state of law, is at the heart of these founding principles and of current trends in Ivorian society".

From the earliest years of independence, the Ivorian Government has understood that promoting human rights goes hand in hand with development and peace. The late President Félix Houphouët-Boigny stated that peace and poverty are not good bedfellows. Above all, we must, as my country has striven to do, promote access for all to education, health care and basic social services so that every citizen may fully enjoy his rights and live in dignity. For us, development, the foundation of peace, is the basis of the promotion of human rights, the *sine qua non* for enjoying civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Extreme poverty is the very negation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. As the late President Houphouët-Boigny said, a hungry man is not a free man. In strengthening international cooperation in promoting human rights, we must focus first on human rights education and training.

The creation of a favourable environment also requires increased official development assistance to achieve the goals of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, profitable prices for commodities, debt relief or conversion to social projects, and the adoption of effective measures to reduce the negative impact of globalization on the economies of developing countries.

My country welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal to integrate human rights into all United Nations activities. Above all, agencies should sponsor the promotion of human rights.

On this occasion, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund to promote and protect the rights of children and encourages the initiatives of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank to combat poverty and discrimination against women, which are the sources of many human rights violations.

We urgently appeal to other institutions and donors to support the efforts of developing countries, which are seeking to achieve access for all in the near future to basic health care, education, nutrition, work and basic social services, the keys to a true promotion of human rights.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea) (*interpretation from French*): In commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we should take to heart the profound historical significance this uplifting event has had for the future of humanity. Indeed, the Universal Declaration was the first document in the history of humankind to proclaim the collective commitment of the international community to "human rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations". The Universal Declaration has served for the past half century as a source of inspiration and as the basis for subsequent progress in the field of human rights.

The Republic of Korea also celebrated its fiftieth anniversary this year. In 1948, the first democratic and representative Government in the history of our country was established through free general elections. A Constitution embodying a commitment to the principles of human dignity and fundamental freedoms was also proclaimed. Today, half a century later, under the leadership of President Kim Dae-jung, the Republic of Korea is experiencing steady progress towards the simultaneous flourishing of a true democracy, a stable market economy and a society that supports all human rights for all.

At the dawn of the next millennium, and in particular on this auspicious occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, we are gathered here to affirm our commitment to the noble cause of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this context, my delegation wishes to make a few observations on the aspects we deem the most important.

First, according to our own experiences in political and economic development in the last 50 years, a comprehensive approach that encompasses civil, political, economic and social rights has proved to be the most effective in implementing the human rights agenda. We are convinced that democracy, development and respect

for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, as affirmed in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Indeed, talk of respect for human rights rings hollow without serious efforts to eradicate poverty, empower individuals and their communities and promote women's rights as an integral part of human rights. Moreover, special attention should be given to the needs of vulnerable groups of the population, such as children, the disabled, refugees and internally displaced persons.

Secondly, the United Nations and its Member States should renew their efforts to have all countries sign and ratify the six principal international human rights instruments, in particular the two International Covenants. It is also very important that United Nations Member States respect and implement their commitments as States parties to international human rights instruments.

Thirdly, we must take effective steps to collectively prevent situations in which massive human rights violations take place, as these are among the root causes of conflict in the post-cold-war era. It is essential that the international community eradicate the culture of impunity that currently prevails in many conflict situations. In this connection, my delegation ardently desires to see the International Criminal Court begin its activities at the earliest possible date.

Since the election of President Kim Dae-jung, my Government has taken concrete steps to bolster its national human rights safeguards mechanisms. These steps include preparations for a human rights law and the creation of a national human rights institution. We believe that this initiative will enhance the mechanisms of human rights protection and raise public awareness in this regard.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to echo the call made by Mrs. Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in the statement she made in Paris:

> "All human rights for all — this should be our common call to action on this anniversary and in the years to come."

We earnestly hope that by the centennial of the Universal Declaration a broad culture of human rights will prevail in every corner of the world, thus faithfully fulfilling the vision of the Universal Declaration and providing a framework conducive to peace, security and prosperity for future generations.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to inform representatives that after having held three meetings, fewer than half of the speakers on the list have spoken. This is because many speakers have gone beyond the five-minute limit established by the General Assembly itself. I hope that the remaining speakers will kindly abide by the five-minute limit.

The meeting rose at 12.10 a.m., Friday, 11 December.